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Written on SEPTEMBER 2, 2014 AT 6:00 AM by SVANDERWERFF

Families and Suicide

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Your family member maybe “acting just fine” one day and the next has taken their

Why?

It is the universal question asked by anyone affected by suicide. Suicide can be as mysterious and unpredictable as any hidden illness that goes undetected. Your family member maybe “acting just fine” one day and the next has taken their own life. There may be outward signs – a history of Depression, Bi-Polar Disorder, or Post-traumatic Stress – or there may be no signs – ever.

It is a confusing experience for family members, it is an angering experience for family members, and it is the



Suicide may not ever be preventable – but there are steps that a family member can do to learn the signs of someone who may become or is having suicidal thoughts.

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saddest day ever for those family members.

So how do families address suicide? Can they prevent it? Can they heal from the loss of a loved one taking their own life?



Allow your children to share with you how they feel through what makes them comfortable

Suicide may not ever be preventable – but there are steps that a family member can do to learn the signs of someone who may become or is having suicidal thoughts. Because we are part of a family – sometimes we don't always see what's before our eyes – take the time to “know” your family – we all feel pretty confident when someone in the family is doing something obvious – but take the time to learn the subtleties of each of your family member's personalities. Take the time to communicate – ask questions, talk, listen and learn one

another.

How do we help each other cope after a family member has committed the tragic act of suicide?

Children respond to stress and emotional pain differently than adults do – they may show their sorrow and grief through behaviors rather than expressing verbally. Allow your children to share with you how they feel through what makes them comfortable – play acting their feelings through toys, drawing their feelings on paper, while all along – giving your children the unconditional support to express their feelings. Explain that you may not have an answer of why – but reassure them that it's ok to have feelings about the loss.

And finally – Yes – families do heal from the grief and loss of losing a family member to suicide. It takes time, it takes work and it takes each other to support and provide unconditional love and healing. Families grieve in many ways – families also have a story to tell – create a shared family narrative where there is meaning around the loved one, process through family grief activities such as creating a memory album, song or poem.



Families do heal from the grief and loss of losing a family member.

Losing a family member to suicide is tragic – just remember healing takes all forms, just as families take all forms.

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